

this is a handsome chronicle of Bellows' finest achievements, with archival newsreel footage and rarely seen photographs of the artist and his family providing a glimpse of the elements that helped shape his life. DVD extras include an art gallery, a featurette on Monhegan Island, and archival film of "The Streets of Bellows' New York." A solid tribute to an influential figure in 20th-century American culture, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Johnny Carson: King of Late Night

★★★★1/2

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-710-6 (dvd), 978-1-60883-711-3 (blu-ray).

Although Johnny Carson was not the first host of *The Tonight Show*, his 30-year-reign set the format and standard for every late night talk show. Narrated by Kevin Spacey, filmmaker Peter Jones's documentary—aired on PBS's *American Masters* series—calls Carson the "great American sphinx," because his outward affability masked a deep reserve. The film describes his Nebraska childhood, a somewhat distant relationship with a mother who was slow to show approval, and his early love of magic tricks and performing. Dubbing himself the "Great Carsoni," Carson quickly learned the new medium of television, swiftly progressing through a series of comedy and game shows, before becoming a talk show host where he exhibited mastery of the comedy of reaction and silence, while also displaying an uncanny ability of bringing out the best in his guests. Carson's many marriages were well documented, providing fodder for his *Tonight Show* routines, although less well known was his persistent drinking problem. Comedians, friends, and TV guests say that Carson felt "everybody wanted a piece of him" and he became increasingly remote and standoffish. A veritable who's who of show business celebrities—including Jerry Seinfeld, Jay Leno, and David Letterman—talk about milestones on *The Tonight Show*, as well as Carson's little-known generosity, and his talent for tapping into popular culture, which made his show a must-see and water cooler favorite for three decades. Although the documentary perhaps provides a bit too much detail on Carson's love life, the many interview clips, comedy monologues, and sketches easily demonstrate why Carson remains a legend. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Muhammad Ali: The Man, the Moves, the Mouth ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$9.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).


Narrated by late boxing writer Bert Sugar, this documentary serves up a fine overview of the life, times, and career of heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, born

Cassius Clay. Beginning with Ali's roots as a promising teen amateur in Louisville, KY, the film briskly touches on every one of his 61 fights (56 wins, 5 losses), beginning in 1960 (following a gold medal triumph at the Summer Olympics) through his retirement in 1981. The pivotal bouts (against Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, etc.) are covered in detail, including the amazing events surrounding the Zaire contest with Foreman (the famed "Rumble in the Jungle"). The story of America's love-hate relationship with Ali and the controversies over his conversion to Islam, his draft resistance during the Vietnam War, and his boastful clowning persona are also covered here, as well as his post-retirement role on the world stage as a humanitarian symbol who has been slowed but not stalled by Parkinson's disease. Boxing fans will appreciate the archival fight footage here, which underscore what made Ali so good in the ring: speed, strength, arm reach, and smarts. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Revolutionary ★★★1/2


(2011) 92 min. DVD: \$79: public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. Stourwater Pictures. PPR.

The history of Communist China is portrayed from a unique American perspective in Irv Drasin's documentary, which profiles the life of Sidney Rittenberg (b. 1921), a South Carolina native and avowed leftist who became a member of the U.S. Communist Party while in college. During his World War II Army tour, Rittenberg was assigned to duty in China, and decided to remain there after the war's end, becoming a committed member of the Chinese Communist Party and working with many of its leaders, including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai—although he was twice imprisoned on suspicion of espionage, spending a total of 16 years in solitary confinement. Rittenberg returned to the U.S. in 1980 with his Chinese wife and is now on the faculty of the Chinese Studies Program at Pacific Lutheran University in Parkland, WA. Much of *The Revolutionary* consists of interviews with Rittenberg (illustrated with archival footage), during which he relates the events of his life, including his relationship with the Chinese Communist leadership, his activism during the Cultural Revolution, and his time in prison. Rittenberg's reflections are equally critical of xenophobic Chinese officials, Americans who rebuffed Chinese diplomatic overtures, and himself. Whether or not one agrees with the choices Rittenberg made or the opinions he holds, the documentary presents a remarkable firsthand account of a significant epoch in modern history known to Americans only at considerable remove (for the most part), as well as a portrait of a fascinating man. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



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